Poetic Identities

Rationale: The purpose of this unit is to introduce students to different forms of poetry that are interconnected to different aspects of "Identity". Thematically, the unit revolves around the concept of how identities are constructed in society and expressed in writing, visually, verbally and aurorally. Students will compare and contrast different forms of poetry in order to familiarize themselves with the multiple ways that messages connected to identity can be expressed. This will allow students to create a poem of their own to share with the class, complete with a comprehensive personal analysis of their poem and others. Students will also build the essential skills required to do effective close readings of poetry. Overall, an exposure to many poetic expressions will allow students to explore and experience the beauty and art that defines poetry, and by extension, our identities.

Context: This unit works well as a transition unit throughout the 20-1 curriculum and throughout the semester. However, as a first choice, the unit is a good introduction to and revision of many key rhetorical terms and figurative language devices. It can therefore be a good first or second unit to have in the scope of a year plan.
Unit Plan Overview

• Section 1: “Identi-U”
• Section 2: “Identi-Me”
• Section 3: “Identi-We”
• Section 4: “Voices”
• Section 5: “Journeys”
• Section 6: “A Light in the Dark”
• Section 7: “Perspective”
• Section 8: “I Can See The Music”
• Section 9: “One Person, One Nation”
• Section 10: “Poetry Slam!” or “Poets Anonymous”
Outcomes

**Students will create a variety of responses:**

Students will create a creative personal response to the theme of "identity" in this unit. Although the theme is open to their individual interpretations, they will be expected to narrow this topic and analyze a specific aspect of identity.

**Students will use a variety of print and nonprint forms:**

The focus of this unit will be on poetry, but aspects of Oral/Visual/Multimedia presentation will also be used to complement this focus.
Outcomes

Translation of Curriculum Objectives:

GO 1:

Students will experiment with language and consider new perspectives.

GO 2:

Students will discern and analyze context when looking at the various poems throughout this unit.

Form, structure, purpose and audience will also be focuses of analysis.

A variety of textual mediums will also be analyzed.
Outcomes

Translation of Curriculum Objectives:

GO 3:

This Outcome will not be covered in this unit.

GO 4:

Student will present visual poems using technology and/or hand-crafted forms of expression.

Revision and reflection will be an integral part of our analysis of poetry throughout this unit.
Outcomes

Translation of Curriculum Objectives:

GO 5:

Students will provide feedback to students on their visual poetry presentations.
Assessments and Evaluation

- Poetry Journal Responses
- This N’ That
- Poet’s Corner
- Poetry Slam!
Students will respond to daily (or every second day) to quotation responses, which are either poem excerpts or simply metaphorical/symbolic anecdotes or words of wisdom. Students will only be evaluated based on their attempted perception/analysis of the quotations (no "right" or "wrong" answers apply). Students will be graded based on the thought and detail they apply to each response ( /5).*Formative Assessment
This n’ That

Students will compare and contrast song and poem selections in order to identify how similar themes can be expressed through different poetic mediums. The analysis will be an interactive one where students will annotate the lyrics/verses of one song and one poem. Students will circle, highlight, underling and annotate these drafts in order to compare and contrast the two selections. A short 100-200 word written summary of their analysis will be attached to the final product ( / 10).*Summative Assessment
The collaborative nature of this unit is essential for students to understand the collective, reflective nature of poetry. Students will be asked to bring two selections to class:
One poem of their own interest related to identity.
One song with lyrics that expresses their respective personal identity.

*Formative Assessment
Students will create visual poems using a combination of images and written text. The visual poem will in response to the theme "identity" and students may make a poem that personally relates to their own identities or the nature of identity in society as a whole. Students will also create and present an analysis of their poem. The evaluation of this project will be based on adherence to the following assignment components: -Poem title; use of visual and written text; written analysis of 350-500 words which includes an analysis of the meaning of the poem and poetic devices used; presentation of poem and the written analysis; completion of peer feedback

*Summative Assessment
Featured Canadian Poems

Atwood
“The Weather”
“This is a Photograph of Me”

Koyczan
“This is My Voice”
“We Are More”

P.K. Page
“Adolescence”

Mark Strand
“Keeping Things Whole”

Allan Cooper
“Black Carnations”

Gary Michael Dault
“Branch Line”

Leonard Cohen
“Anthem”

Desi Di Nardo
“Keep Telling”

Bronwen Wallace - “The Woman in This Poem”
Note: Lessons are “skeletal” in nature and may be extended or compressed depending on the teacher’s preference.
Day 1: “Identi-U”

- Familiarizing students with poetry: brainstorming session discussion
- Personal identity activity
- Free-verse writing (visual prompt)
  - LINK: http://www.slideshare.net/beckerl1/pictures-for-writing-prompts
- Free-verse writing (written prompt)
  - LINK http://yeahwriters.tumblr.com/
Day 2: “Identi-Me”

- Sharing poems created in yesterday's class
- Discussing strengths
- Poetry: What I know -- Think-Pair-Share
- Poetry Terms: Title, audience, content
- Poem - "Branch Line" by Gary Michael Dault
- Song Lyrics - “The Captain” by Leonard Cohen
  - Pro-love and anti-military identity; influence of the family unit on identity; poetry as music
• Poetry Terms: Breaking it down; context; symbolism; metaphor
• How are we defined by music/poetry?
• Students select a song that expresses their identity (due on day 5)- Margaret Atwood: "This is a Photograph of Me"; "The Weather" -- Expressing social/global issues through poetry; personal identity and a connection to the world
• Introduction of Compare/Contrast Assignment: "IDENTI-WE"
Day 4: “Voices”

- "Anthem" by Leonard Cohen (audio reading on YouTube)
- Poetry Terms: Symbolism (continued); personification; voice
- Object Personification activity
- "This is My Voice" by Shane Koyczan (video)
- "IDENTI-WE" assignment: brainstorming session

LINKS:  
- http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BCS_MwkWzes  
- http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FHczVzGfyqQ
Day 5: “Journeys”

- "Adolescence" by P. K. Page
- Life as a Journey; life's influence on identity- quotation responses: Simile
- "Life is like an egg"- Song,
- "Identity" by John Waller-- responses; personal identity song presentations Part I (song on YouTube)
- Poetry terms: Tone; mood; allusion- Quotation Response Journal
Lesson Highlights

Day 6: “A Light in the Dark”

- "Black Carnations" by Allan Cooper
- "Strange Fruit" (video/audio recording with images)
- Race and Poetry; Prejudice-
- Poetry Terms: theme; imagery; apostrophe; connotations and denotations
- "Black Carnations" by Allan Cooper(*Close Reading)
  - breaking it down; chunking; analyzing; reading/rereading/discussing/rereading/analyzing
- Showcase Song Presentations Part II
Day 7: “Perspective”

- "Keep Telling Me" by Desi Di Nardo - Think-Pair-Share
- The importance of perspective in poetry
- “The Woman in This Poem” by Bronwen Wallace (personification; personal identity)
  - Students will bring poems to share that are related to identity; poem presentation rehearsal
  - Showcase Song Presentations Part III- Quotation Response Journal
Lesson Highlights

Day 8: “I Can See the Music”

- Christian Bok Visual Poem Selections: by William Carlos Williams--connotation/denotation- materialism and identity-
  - debate: what you wear defines you
- "The Cure" - Visual Poem (YouTube)-- how do the images influence the meaning of the poem/the interpretation of the poem?
- "Arms Reaching" by Jennifer Phillips-
- Visual Poetry Assignment- Quotation Response Journal
- Sponge: Canadian Poetry Festival Selections
  [http://writing.upenn.edu/pennsound/x/Bok.php](http://writing.upenn.edu/pennsound/x/Bok.php)
• "We are More" by Shane Koyczan -- Canadian Identity-- how do we define ourselves? Canadian? Albertan? Lethbridgian? Prestwick Rise Citizen? "Gossip" -- how the images of others define our identity- debate: If we know the nature of rumours, why are we so quick to believe them (or are we)?- film clip from the film, 'Doubt' : "Gossip"Visual Poetry Assignment
Lesson Highlights

Day 10: “Poetry Slam!”

• Presentation of Visual poems
  • students respond with written feedback for each presenter
  • *see assignment section for details on the presentation method
• Quotation Journal Response
  • Hand in journals along with poetry slam assignment
  • Unit reflection discussion: identifying and describing the unique aspects of Canadian poetry
Poem Appendix
Adolescence by P. K. Page

In love they wore themselves in a green embrace.
A silken rain fell through the spring upon them.
In the park she fed the swans and he
whittled nervously with his strange hands.
And white was mixed with all their colours
as if they drew it from the flowering trees.

At night his two finger whistle brought her down
the waterfall stairs to his shy smile
which like an eddy, turned her round and round
lazily and slowly so her will
was nowhere—as in dreams things are and aren't.

Walking along avenues in the dark
street lamps sang like sopranos in their heads
with a voiceness they never understood
and all their movements when they were together
had no conclusion.

Only leaning into the question had they motion;
after they parted were savage and swift as gulls.
asking and asking the hostile emptiness
they were as sharp as partly sculptured stone
and all who watched, forgetting, were amazed
to see them form and fade before their eyes.
BLACK CARNATIONS

There's someone inside us
who doesn't believe in real time,
and doesn't want it. He knows
a love that is dark
and wild, and his hand

reaches instinctively for it.
A thirsty man claims water;
the cricket, feeling the cold
that is coming,
sings of the frost.

And Rumi saw
through the eyes of his friend
even after his friend was gone.
Why should we expect
anything less from ourselves?

(Copyright Allan Cooper 1998, 2008)
BRANCH LINE

A leaf fell on the floor of
a subway car
all the passengers looked up at
the metal grill
the ceiling
every one of them expecting
to see the sky

*Gary Michael Dault*
Anthem by Leonard Cohen

The birds they sang
at the break of day
Start again
I heard them say
Don't dwell on what
has passed away
or what is yet to be.
Ah the wars they will
be fought again
The holy dove
She will be caught again
bought and sold
and bought again
the dove is never free.
Ring the bells that still can ring
Forget your perfect offering
There is a crack in everything
That's how the light gets in.
We asked for signs
the signs were sent:
the birth betrayed
the marriage spent
Yeah the widowhood
of every government --
signs for all to see.
I can't run no more
with that lawless crowd
while the killers in high places
say their prayers out loud.

But they've summoned, they've summoned up
a thundercloud
and they're going to hear from me.
Ring the bells that still can ring ...
You can add up the parts
but you won't have the sum
You can strike up the march,
there is no drum
Every heart, every heart
to love will come
but like a refugee.
Ring the bells that still can ring
Forget your perfect offering
There is a crack, a crack in everything
That's how the light gets in.
Ring the bells that still can ring
Forget your perfect offering
There is a crack, a crack in everything
That's how the light gets in.
That's how the light gets in.
That's how the light gets in.
Keep Telling Me by Desi Di Nardo

It’s 12:34
And I hear them
Battering me with a foul message
The maddening interpretations
The two dots taunting
Walk backwards with me and you will see
It can be so much cleaner
It can be simple
Face down they will come for me
I can feel this
Come death come birth
Edge a little closer
I am ready to receive it
Keeping Things Whole by Mark Strand

In a field
I am the absence
of field.
This is
always the case.
Wherever I am
I am what is missing.

When I walk
I part the air
and always
the air moves in
to fill the spaces
where my body's been.

We all have reasons
for moving.
I move
to keep things whole.
It was taken some time ago
At first it seems to be
a smeared
print: blurred lines and grey flecks
blended with the paper;

then, as you scan
it, you can see something in the left-hand corner
a thing that is like a branch: part of a tree
(balsam or spruce) emerging
and, to the right, halfway up
what ought to be a gentle slope, a small frame house.

In the background there is a lake,
and beyond that, some low hills.

(The photograph was taken
the day after I drowned.

I am in the lake, in the center
of the picture, just under the surface.

It is difficult to say where precisely, or to say
how large or how small I am:
the effect of water
on light is a distortion.

but if you look long enough
eventually you will see me.)
“The Weather” by Margaret Atwood

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=z6uhNEZj7TU
“This is My Voice” by Shane Koyczan

http://apeaceofconflict.com/2010/03/14/this-is-my-voice/

“We Are More” by Shane Koyczan

http://vancouverisawesome.com/2010/02/12/shane-koyczans-we-are-more/

“The Woman in This Poem” by Bronwen Wallace

http://www.oocities.org/sorrenti888/thewomaninthispoem.htm